

EMILE ZOLA, NOVELIST AND
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In the literary annals of Trance, 1876, 1877, and 1878 must always rank as the years of "L'Assommoir." Yet they were by no means barren in other respects. They cover the period when Victor Hugo published, not only a new series of "La Ldgende des Siecles," but also "L'Art d'etre Grandpere" and "L'Histoire d'un Crime." And other poets were raising their voices: Leconte de Lisle was issuing his translation of Sophocles, MaHamae* his "Apres-midi d'un Faune," Dierx his "Amants," Anatole Prance his "Noces Corinthiennes," Eichepin his "Chanson des Gueux." And fiction, as usual, poured from the printing presses of France. Flaubert's "Trois Contes"; Daudet's « Jack » and "Le Nabab"; Goncourt's "La Fille Elisa"; Octave Feuillet's "Amours de Philippe"; George Sand's last stories, "La Tour de Perce-mont" and "Marianne"; Ferdinand Fabre's best book, "L'Abbe* Tigrane," were then first offered to the reading public. And going further afield one finds "Le Train 17" and "La Maison Vide," by Jules Claretie; "Les Batailles du Mariage". and "Sans Famille," by Hector Malot; "Le Mariage" Samuel Brohl, by Cherbuliez; "Eaymonde," by Andrd Theuriet; "Michel Strogoff," by Jules Verne; "L'Homme de la Croix-aux-Boeufs," by Le*on Cladel, also appearing at this time. But none of these, and indeed, briefly, no novel,

or play, or poem, or historical or philosophical work of the time stands forth conspicuously, preeminently, as "L'Assommoir" does, to give its name to the date, to mark the period, to indicate a climax or an evolution in French literature.

Before "L'Assommoir," the critics had often treated Zola's books and theories with silent contempt, but they could do so no longer. They were at last compelled to recognise that a new force had arisen, and that they must